



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **North Dakota Department of Health Highlights the Importance of HPV Vaccination**

BISMARCK, N.D.—The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) reminds the public that everyone between the ages of 11 and 26 should receive the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine for the prevention of cervical and other cancers during National Cervical Cancer Awareness Month in January.

According to Molly Howell, Immunization Program Manager with the NDDoH, every 20 minutes someone in the United States is diagnosed with an HPV-related cancer. Almost all cervical cancer is caused by HPV.

A three-dose series of HPV vaccines for all adolescents 11 to 12 years of age, with catch-up vaccination at ages 13 to 26, can prevent HPV infection and its associated cancers. A new vaccine, Gardasil 9®, was recently licensed for use in the United States that will provide protection against 90 percent of all cervical cancers. “It is important to be vaccinated against HPV to prevent the disease and its related cancers,” said Howell. “Anyone not previously vaccinated, even if they are already sexually active, should receive the full three dose series.”

North Dakota participates in the Vaccines For Children (VFC) federal entitlement program, which provides free vaccine for children 18 years of age and younger who are American Indian, Medicaid-eligible, uninsured or have insurance that does not cover vaccinations. However, most insurance plans do cover HPV vaccine. The North Dakota Immunization Program also has an adult vaccination program that provides HPV vaccines to uninsured or underinsured adults. Contact your health care provider or local public health unit for more information about these vaccine programs.

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“Even though HPV vaccine has been available since 2006, vaccination rates in North Dakota remain low, with only 41.1 percent of girls and 18.4 percent of boys, ages 13 through 17, being fully vaccinated,” said Howell. “North Dakota’s HPV vaccination rates are well below the rates for other routinely recommended adolescent vaccines. These low rates are concerning, as unvaccinated North Dakotans are not protected against this serious disease, which causes cancer.”

In an effort to increase HPV vaccination rates, the North Dakota Immunization Program has been sending recall notices to parents of adolescents ages 12 to 17 who are 30 or more days behind on their adolescent immunizations, including those who have started but not completed the HPV series. Starting in 2015, postcards will be sent to the parents of adolescents turning 11, encouraging them to vaccinate their children against HPV. Additionally, the North Dakota Immunization Program is conducting a statewide television, radio and online media campaign to promote HPV vaccination. Parents are encouraged to visit [www.getHPVvaccine.com](http://www.getHPVvaccine.com) for more information. It is important to vaccinate our children today to protect them from cancer tomorrow.

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